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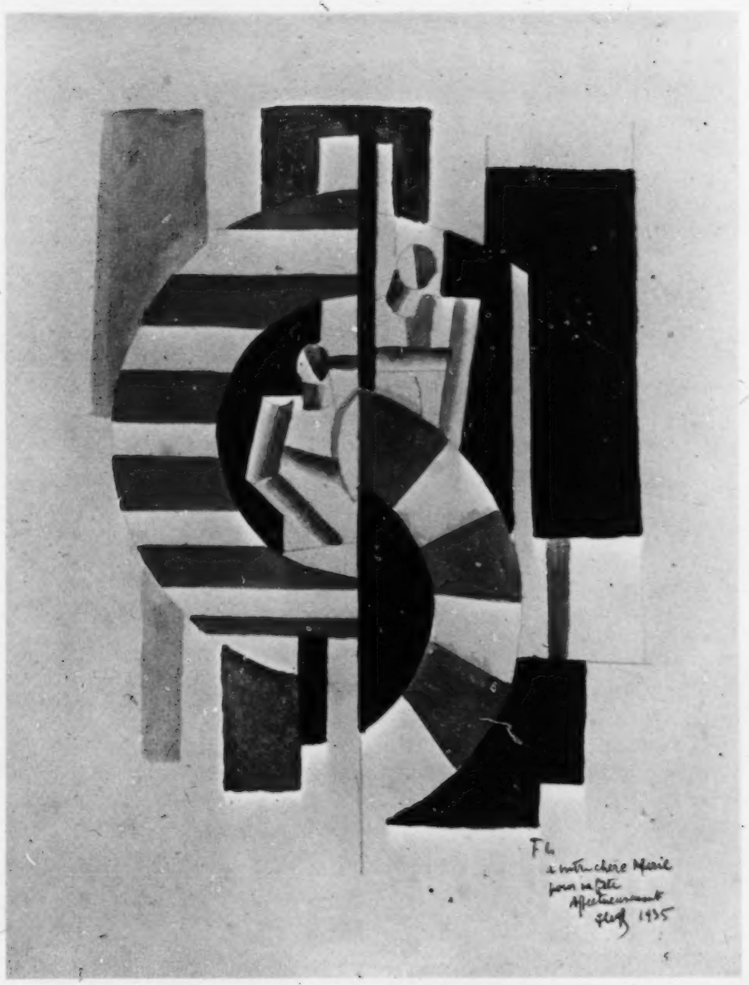
AN INTIMATE VIEW OF

F LÉGER



Cover: 4. Composition, gouache, c. 1920

Title page: 25. Femme clown, ink, c. 1953

Back cover: Book shield, ink, c. 1928

Printed in USA by Yorktown Printing Corporation
Blue Moon Gallery and Lerner-Heller Gallery 1974

AN INTIMATE VIEW OF

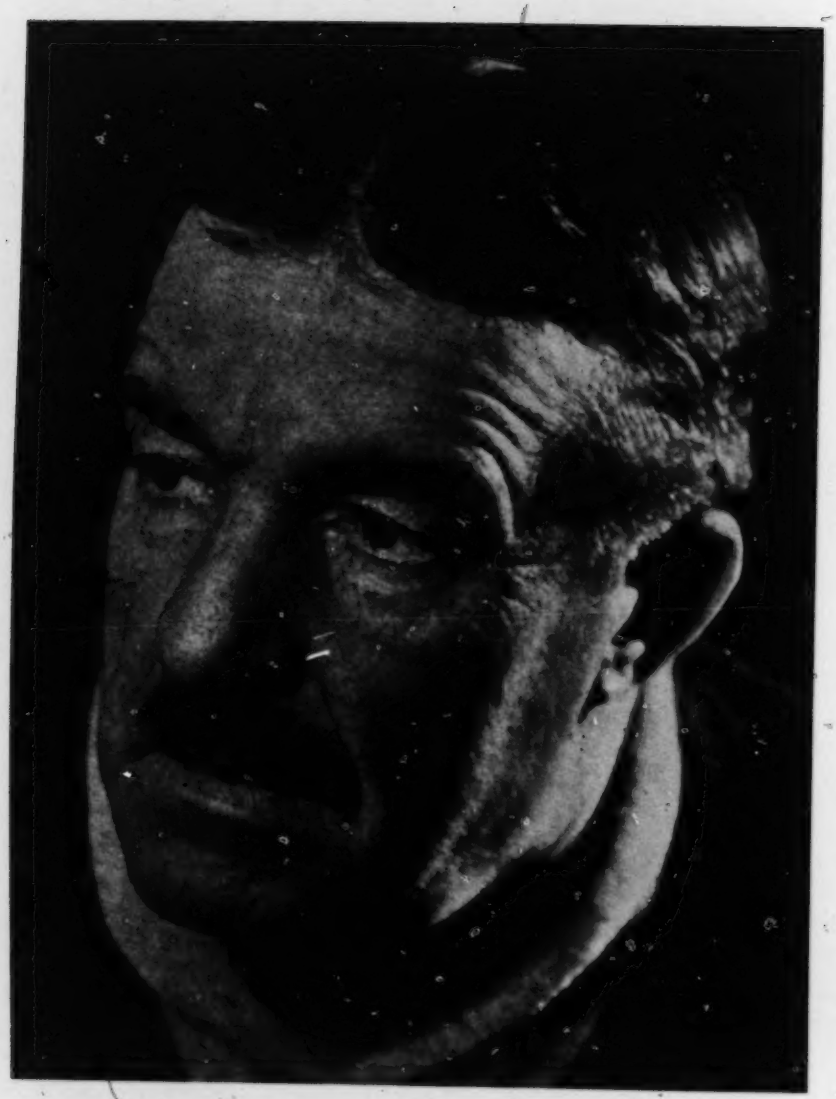
F. LEGER

October 8 to November 9, 1974
at

789 Madison Avenue
New York

BLUE MOON GALLERY
9 East 84th Street
New York, N.Y. 10028
(212) 628-8673

LERNER - HELLER GALLERY
789 Madison Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10021
(212) 861-9010



Fernand Leger (photo Man Ray, c. 1925)

Fernand Leger's position in modern painting as the prophet of urban culture and the poet of the mechanical element almost obscures his plastic accomplishments on which these titles rest; that is, his revolutionary development of the contrast of forms, objects in space, and color outside the figurative form. These techniques are all related and flow one from the other. For his entire career Leger built his art progressively, never wanting for new ideas or new projects.

Ironically the continual freshness of this progression depended upon his work method of development by repetition. For Leger virtually everything was a project to be almost endlessly explored through variation. A marvelous draughtsman, he would work out a complicated concept in crayon or ink from which point he would then simplify in a series of gouaches of larger and larger size. From thence he would work his way through his idea on canvases of increasing size until he reached the ultimate — the monumental version.

This technique, however, was far from a mechanical exercise. Leger had a different style for each size, and he worked out spatial solutions for his images as the size varied. Thus in many small easel paintings, there is a nervous almost blurry technique which gives way to a more static approach in larger versions. As Leger expanded his surfaces and was left with larger empty spaces between his original forms, he devised ways of filling them, usually with serpentine forms that maintained a dynamic for the eye as his main images bulked larger.

It is probably this method of repetition and his early use of mechanical elements that have diverted attention from the humanistic sweep of Leger's work. While Leger himself has insisted his use of the human body has been as an objective element, people as subject matter nevertheless pervade his work. Leger always delighted in going to the circus, and its spirit is as much an element in his paintings of it as the unique plastic treatment with which he depicted its form. If one took a statistical count, birds and flowers as well would heavily outweigh mechanical elements. One has only to analyze his last great themes — divers, cyclists, the country outing and the circus to realize this, and even the Constructors is about men who build rather than the girders they put together. In Leger the sentiment is humanistic but the result is not sentimental.

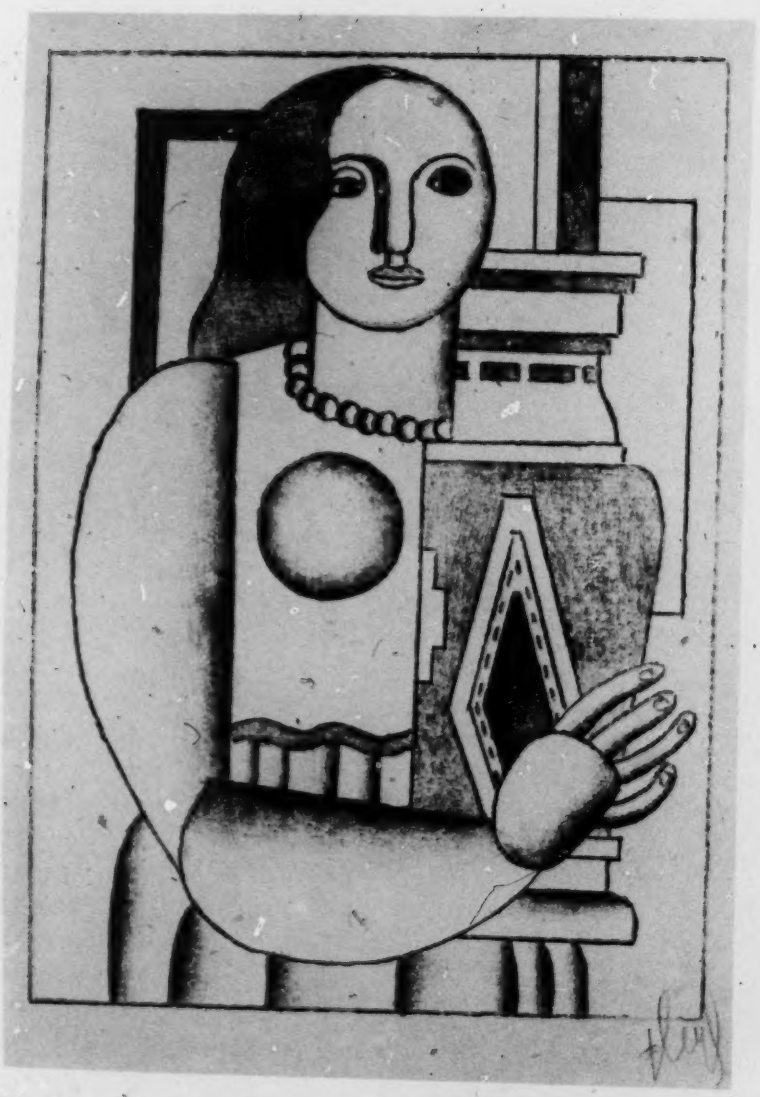
Leger was an outgoing man who engaged himself in his world more than most of his peers, but from an artistic viewpoint. After World War I Leger was designing covers for several American literary reviews, contributing to German reviews, abstracting Charlie Chaplin first for book illustrations and then for his classic film, Ballet Mecanique. He became friendly with Le Corbusier and developed his taste for murals integrated with architecture. For Leger there were no contradictions between life and art. While immediately after World War I, in which he was gassed, he illustrated the anti-war *J'ai tue* by his friend Blaise Cendrars, he had still found in the scenes of Verdun and in pieces of artillery the possibility of plastic inventiveness.

Leger also traveled widely, not only in Europe but in America. While never ceasing his main activity of drawing and painting, he applied himself also to stage and costume design and to mural decoration. First these decorations were painted and later, towards the end of his life, developed in ceramics and stained glass. But Leger's genius and integrity often left him with projects unrealized. He came to New York to create murals for Rockefeller Center but instead only decorated Nelson Rockefeller's apartment. His Christmas card to his wife announcing $3500, reproduced in this catalogue, is thus in the nature of a disappointment. The other letter reproduced indicates that he secured a $400 stipend for a preface by Henry Miller, but for a book that netted Leger only $1000. Thus while these personal notes speak of money, they do not betray the reality of financial and artistic disappointment which Leger frequently suffered.

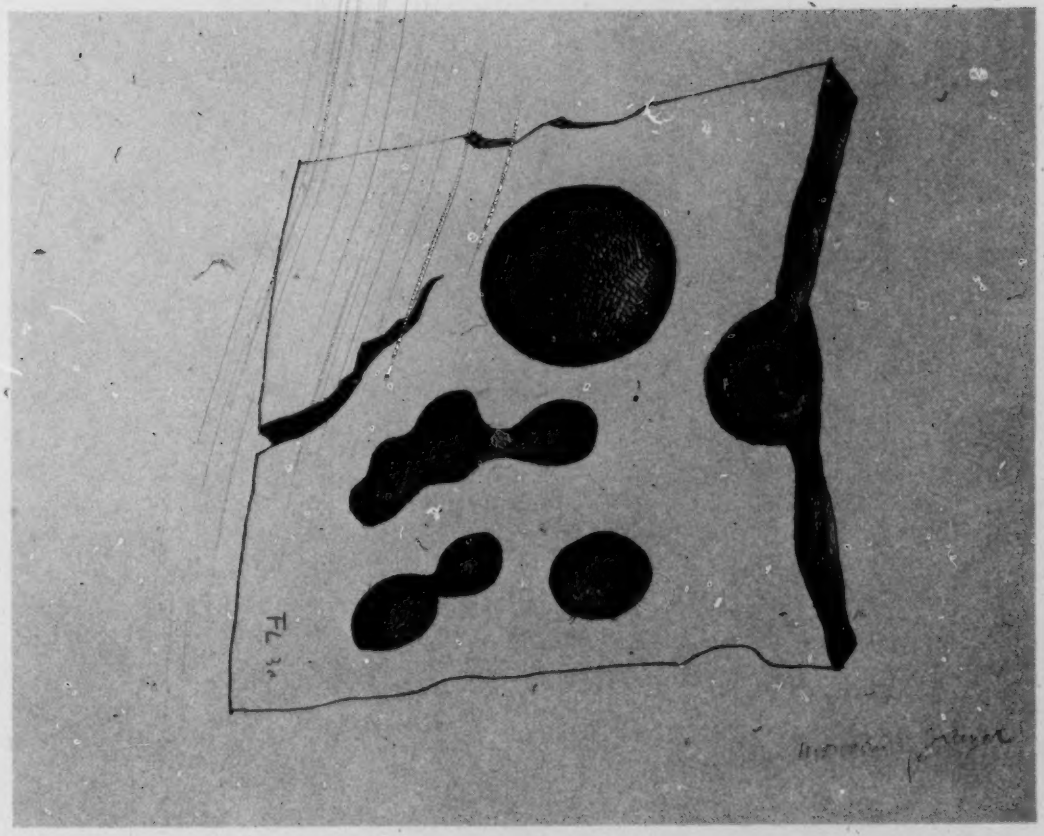
In a way the most intimate view of Leger is in his dedications and his various ways of signing. He had an unvarying signature for his prints from 1920 to 1955 (except for the r), unlike most other artists. He would only accent his name in cover or other designs. Studies were if anything initialed, rarely signed. When Leger gave a drawing as a gift, however, he usually wrote something (as if to differentiate it from a work to be sold) and signed it with the signature he used in letters. These were life-long habits, just as his work habits from a drawing to his "final state" of a painting never varied, mixing repetition with unerring progression.

—L.M. SAPHIRE

3. Verdun, pencil, 1916



37. Femme tenant un vase, lithograph, 1928

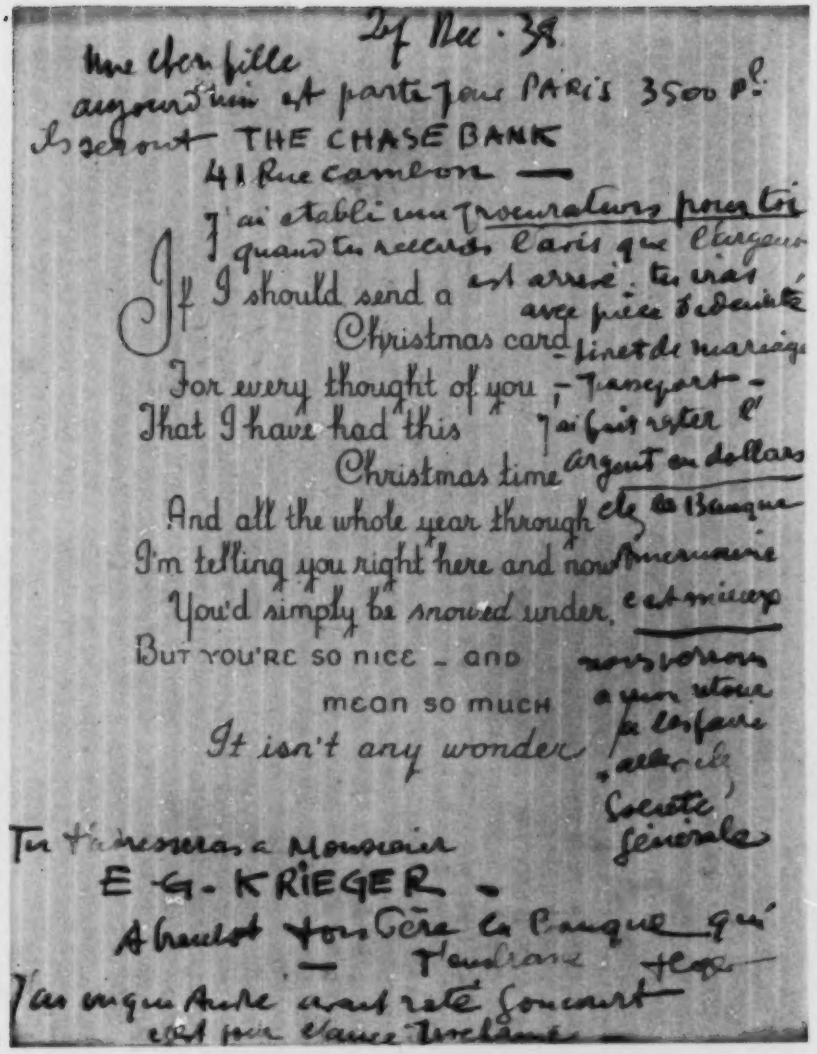


6. Morceau de gruyere, ink, 1930

7. Femme a la feuille, ink, 1931

8. Le roi Saul, pencil and gouache, 1937

10. Greetings at Christmas, gouache over greeting card , 1938



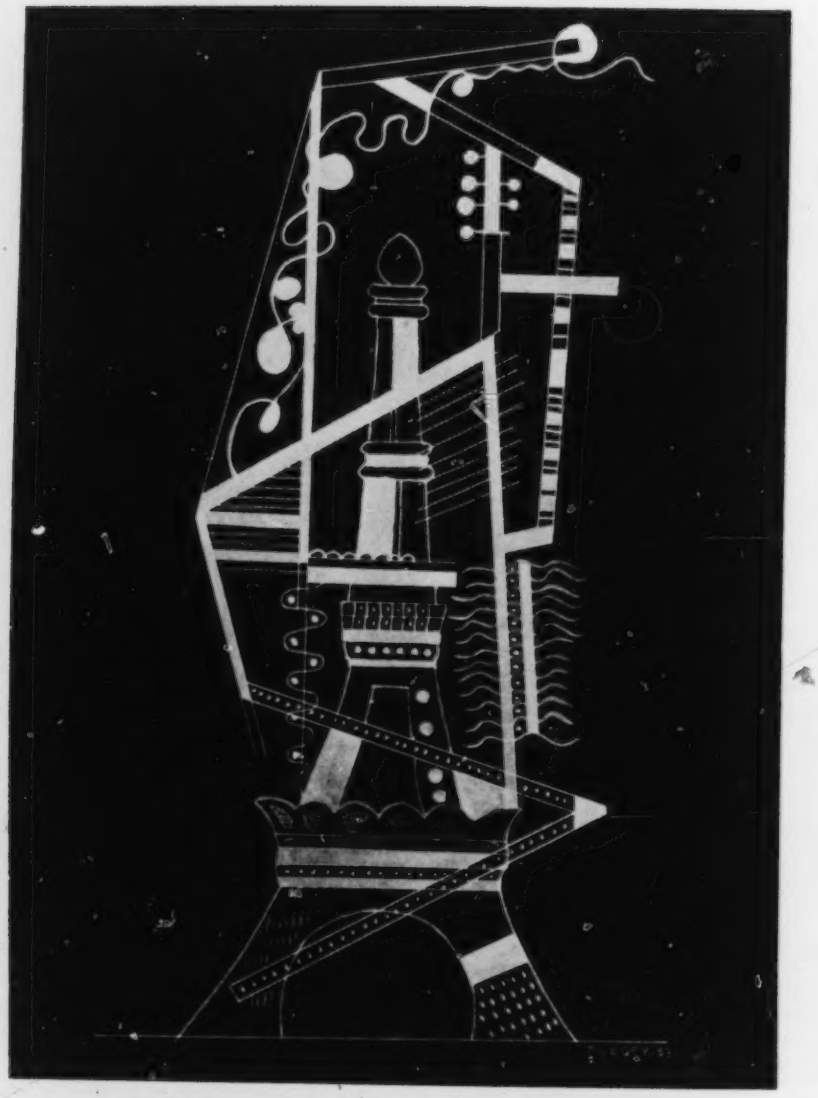
My dear girl,

Today $3500 has left for Paris.* It will be at The Chase Bank, 41 Rue Cambon — I have established an account for you. When you receive the notice that the money has arrived, you go with identity card, marriage record, passport. I've left the money in dollars at the American Bank. It's better. We will see on my return what to do with it at the Societe Generale. See Mr. E.G. KRIEGER. Til then, your father the Bank who embraces you.

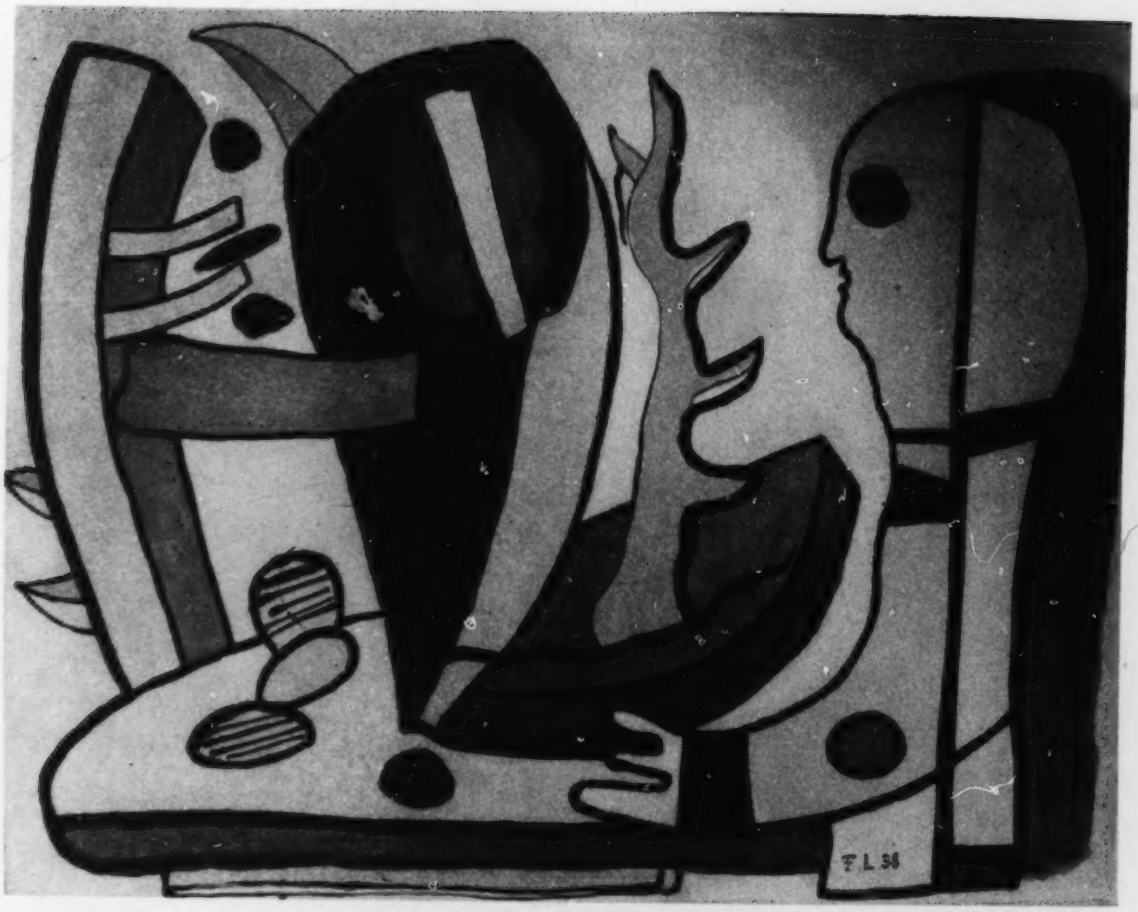
F. Leger

I saw that Andre lost the Gongourt. It's for next year.

*This money was presumably connected with Leger's decoration of Nelson Rockefeller's apartment. This card was to his wife Jeanne.

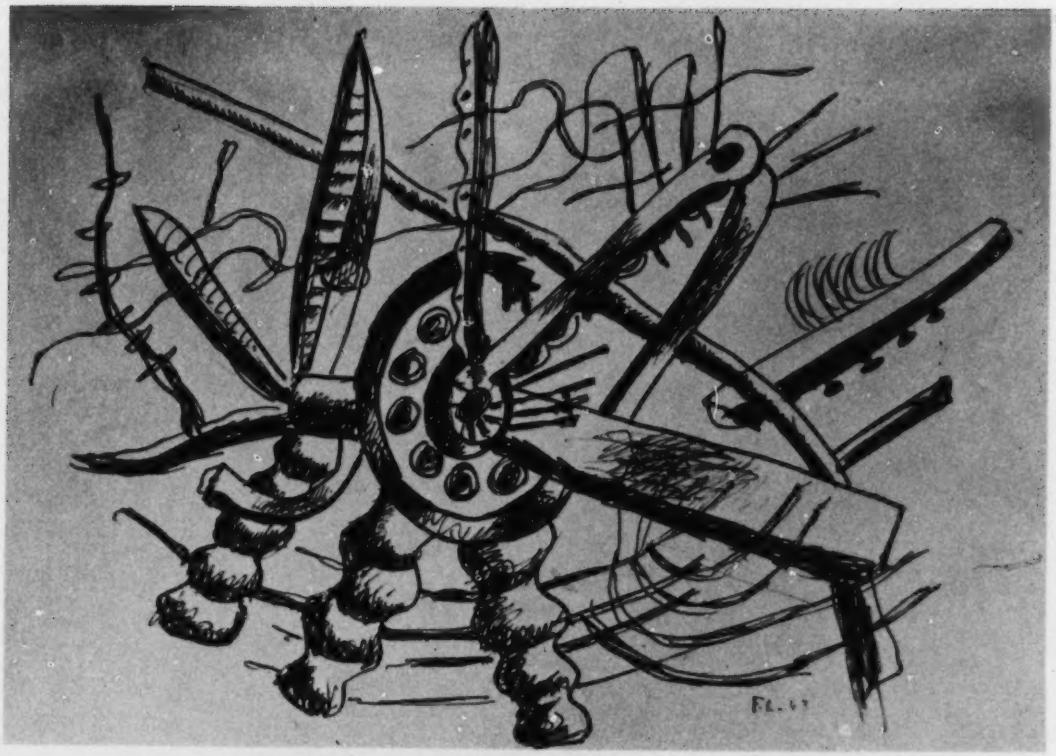


9. La tour Eiffel, white gouache, 1937



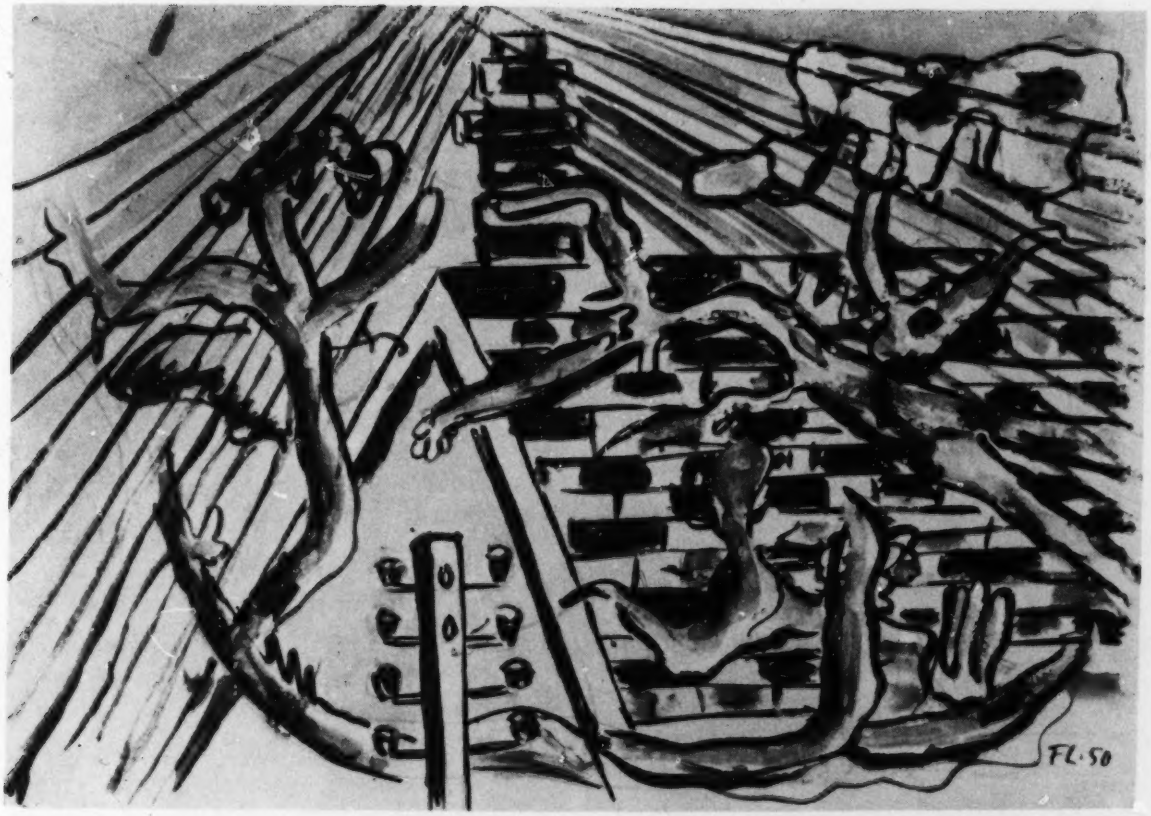
12. Le vase noir , gouache, 1938

13. Composition, wash, c. 1943

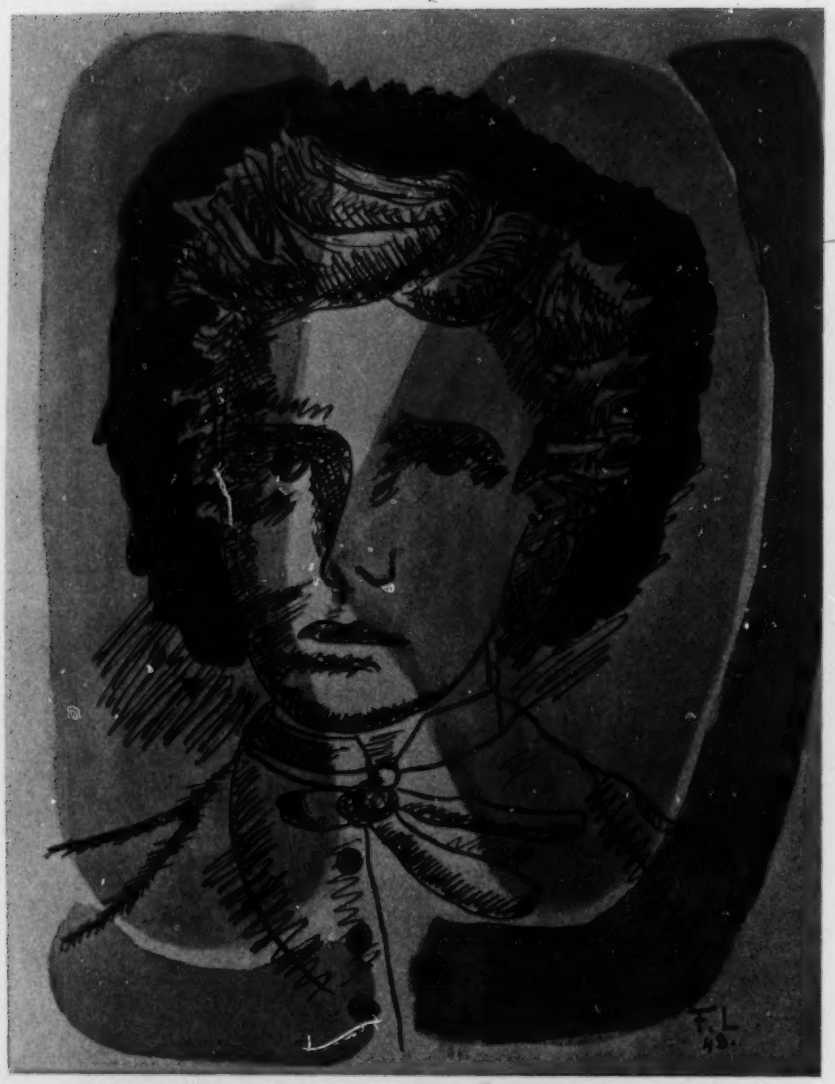


14. Composition, ink, 1943

16. Composition au cheval blanc, oil, 1945



19. L'arbre et la maison, gouache, 1950



17. Portrait de Rimbaud, ink and gouache, 1948

11 Fevr 48

Monsieur

Par ce même courrier je vous envoie deux pages critiques sur Rimbaud par Henry Miller. Je les trouve magnifiques. et cela donnera du poids au livre que nous allons preparer.

J'attend le plan du poème choisi - naturellement ne pas oublier celui intitulé "le temps des Assassins" Mademoiselle Andriny a eu des difficultés pour son départ. J'espère qu'elle est bien arrivée tout de même -

Toutes ces questions Financières sont terriblement compliquées. Faites pour le mieux -

Prevenez Henry Miller de l'endroit à New York où il pourra toucher ces 400 dollars. son adresse est H. Miller - Big-Sur - California USA

Nous avons causé avec Mlle Andriny de 5 pochoirs avec texte de ma main je crois l'idée intéressante -

Vous serez gentil de faire faire une copie du texte de Miller et de me l'envoyer ci que j'en ai une épreuve -

A bientôt de vos nouvelles - et croyez à mes sentiments

distingués

Léger

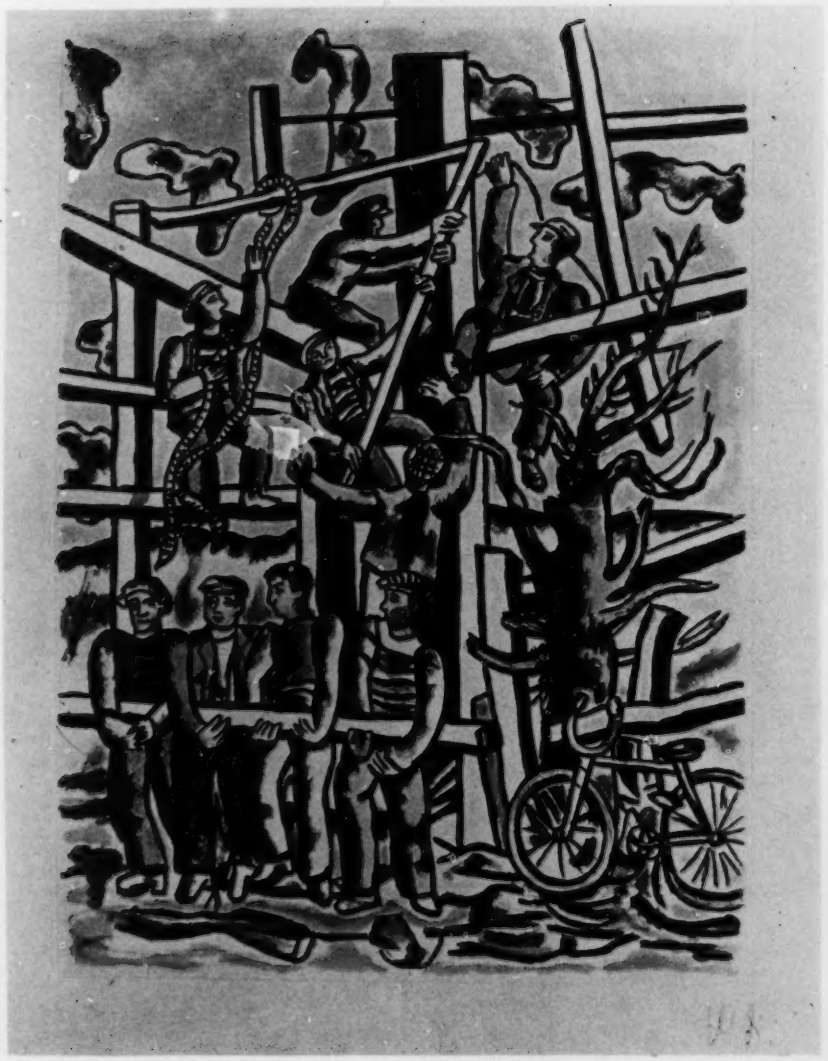
Dear Sir,

By the same mail I've sent you a two page critique on Rimbaud by Henry Miller. I find it magnificent, and that will give weight to the book that we are preparing. I'm waiting for the plan of the poems selected — naturally don't forget the one entitled "Le temps des Assasins! * Mademoiselle Andriny had some difficulties leaving. I hope she nevertheless arrived all right. All these financial questions are terribly complicated. Do everything for the best.

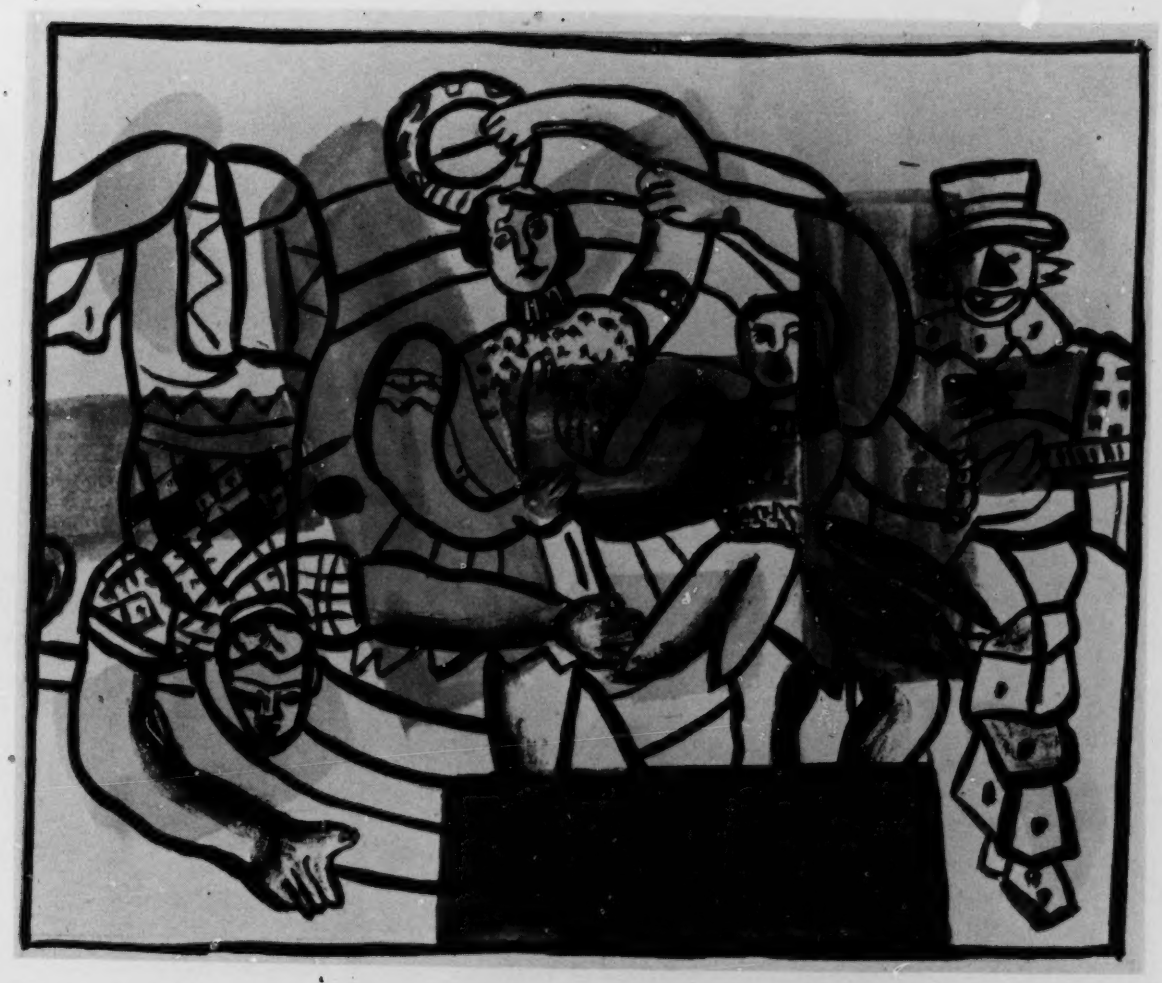
Let Henry Miller know where in New York he can get his $400 dollars. His address is H. Miller, Big Sur — California, USA.

We have talked with Mademoiselle Andriny about 5 pochoirs with text by my hand. I believe it's an interesting idea. You will be kind to have a copy of Miller's text made and send a proof that I can have. Awaiting your news and with my regards — F. Leger.

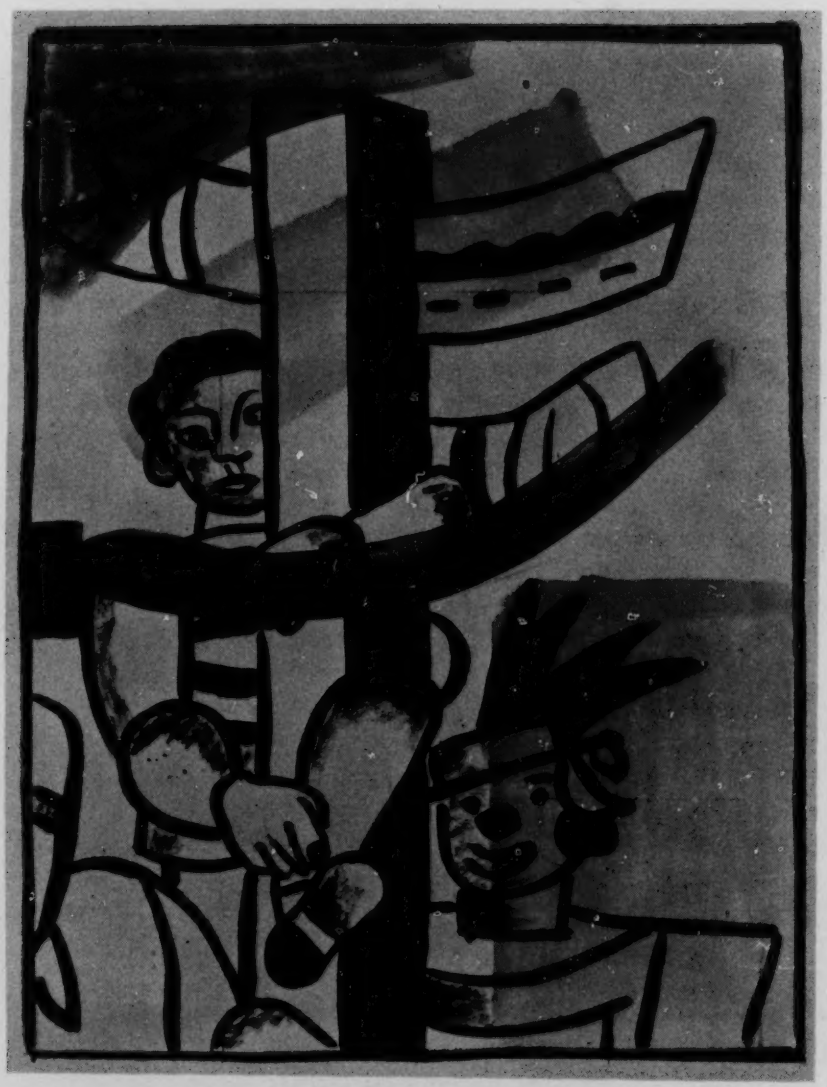
*Millers preface was entitled "Le temps des assasins", from Matinee d'Ivresse. This letter was written to Louis Grosclaude, editor of Rimbaud's Illuminations, which Leger illustrated with 15 lithographs colored by pochoir.



49. Les Constructeurs, aquatint colored by serigraphy, 1953



27. La parade, gouache, c. 1953



26. Vivent les clowns de Medrano, gouache, c. 1953

CATALOGUE

Paintings and Drawings

* 1. Nu, ink, 1908, 12¼ x 8¼" (dated, signed, dedicated A Jane Kootz, tres amicalement, F. Leger)
* 2. Contraste de formes, wash, 1913, 19 x 25" (initialed)
3. Verdun, pencil, 1916 10½ x 7" (initialed dated V'16)
* 4. Composition, gouache, c. 1920, 11 x 9" (initialed, dedicated A notre chere Marie pour sa fete, F. Leger, 1935)
* 5. Nature morte, pencil, 1923, 12 x 8½" (dated, initialed)
* 6. Morceau de gruyere, ink, 1930, 11¼ x 14½" (titled, dated, initialed)
7. Femme a la feuille, ink, 1931, 14 x 8½" (dated, initialed)
8. Le roi Saul, pencil and gouache, 1937, 11 x 8" (titled, dated, initialed, inscribed David Triomphant Opera 37)
9. La tour Eiffel, white gouache, 1937, 25¾" x 19" (signed, dated)
*10. Greetings at Christmas, gouache over greeting card, 1938, 5½ x 4½" (signed, letter on reverse)
*11. Tete de femme, ink, charcoal, 1938, 15¾ x 12½" (dated, initialed, dedicated Amicalement a Willam, F. Leger)
*12. Le vase noir, gouache, 1938, 17½ x 22¼" (initialed, dated)
13. Composition, wash, c. 1943, 10¼ x 8"
*14. Composition, ink, 1943, 8 x 11" (initialed, dated)
15. Les cyclistes, gouache, 1944, 11⅝ x 17" (dated, initialed)
16. Composition au cheval blanc, oil, 1945, 26 x 36" (signed, dated, reverse: titled, signed)
*17. Portrait de Rimbaud, ink and gouache, 1948, 13 x 10" (dated, initialed)
18. Villes, gouache, 1949, 13 x 10" (dated, initialed)
19. L'arbre et la maison, gouache, 1950, 12¼ x 17¼" (initialed, dated)
20. Tete de femme, ink, 1952, 9 x 6" (initialed, study for title page lithograph of *Source Entiere* by Andre Frenaud, Seghers, 1952)
21-24. Studies for lithographs of *Source Entiere*, ink and gouache, 1952, 12¾ x 9⅜" (each initialed)
*25. Femme clown, ink, 1953, 9 x 6" (inscribed Grande Parade 53)
26. Vivent les clowns de Medrano, gouache, c. 1953, 14 x 9¾" (titled, signed)

27. La parade, gouache, c. 1953, 9¾ x 14"
*28. La partie de campagne, wash, 1953, 15¼ x 13" (initialed, dated)

Sculpture

*29. Branches, polychrome ceramic, 1951, 26¾ x 15 x 5", (initialed)
30. La pomme jaune, polychrome ceramic, 1951, 11½ x 10" (signed and dated on reverse)

Graphics

This selection of lithographs and etchings is in conjuction with the forthcoming publication of *Fernand Leger, the Complete Graphic Work,* Blue Moon Press, New York.

*31. La femme au miroir, lithograph, 1920 (included in *Das Kunstblatt*), 23 x 19 cm.
*32. Composition aux deux personages, lithograph, 1920 (included in *Die Schaffenden* #4, edition 125), 28.7 x 23.8cm
33. Lunes en papier, 7 woodcuts, 1921, Editions de la Galerie Simon (edition 112)
*34. Le dejeuner, lithograph, 1921 (for the *Bauhaus portfolio 2,* unissued, edition 140) 21.2 x 28.8cm
*35. Broom cover, color woodcut, 1922, 24.8 x 18.7cm
*36. Le vase, color lithograph, 1927, (edition 100), 53.5 x 43.4cm
*37. Femme tenant un vase, lithograph, 1928 (included in *F. Leger,* Editions Cahiers d'Art, edition 52), 24 x 17cm
*38. Morceau de gruyere, etching, 1935 (included in *23 Gravures,* edition 50), 22.9 x 17.5cm
*39. Composition, color lithograph, 1948 (included in *Brunidor 2,* edition 100), 40 x 28.6cm
*40. Les Illuminations, 15 lithographs, 13 colored by pochoir, 1949, Grosclaude, Editions des Gaules, (edition 395 plus an album of 8 various subjects, edition 99)
*41. Cirque, 63 lithographs, 34 in color and the manuscript text with 22 illuminations and decorations, 1950, E. Teriade, Les Editions Verve (edition 300)
42. L'echaufadage au soleil, color lithograph, 1951 (edition 75), 34 x 45.7cm

*43. L'ouvrier, color lithograph, 1951 (poster for the exhibition Les Constructeurs, edition 800), 59.5 x 49.9cm
*44. Nature morte, color lithograph, 1951 (included in *Les Constructeurs,* Falaize, edition 250 initialed, 50 signed with margins), 12 x 18.1cm
45. Source entiere, 5 lithographs, 4 in color, 1952, Seghers (edition 28)
46. Femme sur fond jaune, color lithograph, 1952 (edition 100), 41.7 x 33.5cm
47. Femmes aux perroquets, color lithograph, 1952 (included in the *Mourlot Centenaire,* edition 110), 41.8 x 60.6cm
48. Composition sur fond jaune, color lithograph, 1952 (edition 75), 43.3 x 54.7cm
49. Les Constructeurs, aquatint colored by serigraphy, 1953 (edition 100), 62.9 x 45.4cm
50. L'oiseau magique, acquatint colored by serigraphy, 1953 (edition 100), 56.6 x 36.4cm
51. Le tournesol, color lithograph, 1953 (edition 132), 40 x 33.3cm
*52. Paysage aux deux oiseaux, color lithograph, 1955 (included in *Un Poeme dans Chaque Livre,* Broder, edition 120 plus 40 unfolded with margins), 12.5 x 18.2cm

*Private or gallery collection. All dimensions are height by width in inches or centimeters.

References

2. Reproduced Cooper, *The Cubist Epoch,* 1970, #186
5. Reproduced Cassou & Leymarie, *Leger Dessins et Gouaches,* 1972, #126
25. Reproduced Cahiers d'art, 1954, p. 137; *Leger,* Guggenheim Museum, 1962, #80; Cassou & Leymarie, *Leger Dessins et Gouaches,* 1972, #291
26, 27. Catalogued in *A la rencontre de Pierre Reverdy,* Fondation Maeght, 1967, #349, 350

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